of moral reality which enables her to see through the dazzle of the superficially refined social circle of the Buckingham Crescent. The social world of *The Awkward Age* forgoes the significant for the perfunctory, the human for the sophisticated, in the pursuit of success, influence and power. The people of this world are guided entirely by motives of lust and material prosperity. What makes them dangerous is the pose of urbanity, which is disarmingly destructive to the innocent and the inexperienced. In a greedy and depraved world, where men and women strive only for material ends, such noble sentiments and disciplines as love, loyalty, and friendship are dislodged by egotism, treachery, and hypocrisy. The concrete universals which ought to sustain true refinement are subverted by the casual abstractions of cultural expediency. This is the world which Nanda is made to encounter as she ccmes of age. and her ordeal is to keep her moral nature inviolate through an awareness of the spiritual distance between appearance and reality.

In this foul and stifling environment, James lets the consciousness of Nanda blossom out into its fragrant fulness. There are varieties of depravity and degrees of corruption in the social circle of Mrs. Brookenham, the mother of Nanda. The people of this circle delight in irregular, if exciting, sexual relationships. Cashmore has an affair, first, with Captain Dent-Douglas, and, later, with young Harold, the spoiled son of Mrs. Brookenham; Lord Petherton starts as a lover of Duchess and ends up as the paramour of the Duchess's niece, Aggie who is married to Mitchy; Lord Petherton and Mitchy are homosexualists. Love has degenerated into lust, and consequently loyalty has lost its value and meaning. Not only are people lustful in this world, but they are also greedy and mercenary, exercising a parasitical control over the nurturing substance of culture. Lord Petherton sponges on Mitchyj Harold has no qualms in taking money from his mother's friend; Mrs. Brookenham and the Duchess vie with each

other to get their daughters married to the wealthy Mitchy; Vanderbank is sorely tempted to marry Nanda for the endowment to be settled on her by Mr. Longdon.

The talk in the drawing-room of the Buckingham Crescent is gay, witty, and gocd-humoured. In 'the temple of analysts', Mrs. Brookenham is the presiding deity, and Mitchy and Vanderbank are her ardent votaries. They analyse and disentangle motives not for self-knowledge and self-betterment, but simply for the sheer cerebral